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SCAU/WEST OAK... 24
Oakland History Room

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We, Bernyce Burke Rydman (narrator) and Pamela Morton (interviewer),

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NARRATOR

Bernyce B. Rydman
Signature of narrator

Bernyce B. Rydman
Name of narrator

1031 Peralta Rd
Address

Concord CA 94520

(dated) 9-7-81

INTERVIEWER

Pamela Morton
Signature of interviewer

Pamela Morton
Name of interviewer

4322½ Montgomery St.
Address of interviewer

Oakland, CA 94611

(dated) 9-7-81

Accepted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project

by _____ _____
(Project Director) (Dated)

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Oakland Neighborhood
History Project

General Topic of Interview _____

Date Sept. 7, 1981 Place Concord, California Length _____

Narrator	Interviewer
Name Bernyce Burke Rydman	Name Pamela Morton
Address _____	Address 4322½ Montgomery St.
_____	Oakland, CA 94611
Name & address of relative, friend _____	Relationship to narrator [friend, neighbor, etc.]
_____	_____
_____	_____
Birthplace West Oakland, CA	Length of acquaintance _____
Birthdate _____	Occasion of interview _____
Occupation(s) _____	_____
_____	_____

Interview Data

Subjects covered, in approximate order, spelling out names of persons and places mentioned

Estimated Time on Tape	Contents
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SEPT 8 1981

Dear Pam:

Something that should be stressed--- most any one growing up in West Oakland, did not have play grounds-- parks, etc for recreation.
At ST. JOSEPH'S INSTITUTE (Catholic School) -- no facilitied at all for games. We could stop by PRESCOTT SCHOOL across the street on the way home, and play on the 'rings' for a few minutes. But we were supposed to be back home by a specified time.

During recess or lunch time, a "nun" was in attendance, to see that the boys did not come into the girls yards, and vice versa. There was not even enough space to play a game of tag, or any thing to keep the students occupied.

Occasionally, through friends, we could go to PRESCOTT SCHOOL and have the 7¢ lunch, which was served daily.

The nearest park with facilities was DE FREMERY-- at 16th- 18th between Union and Adeline Streets. This was available during school vacations-- otherwise too far to take advantage of the play grounds there.

RAIMONDI BASEBALL PARK (Old BAY VIEW) was at 18th and Wood Streets. The boys in that area practiced baseball there-- and several of the West Oakland kids, finally make it to fame, through baseball.

I told you about the 'jobs' my mother had from time to time. But-- we did not have a washing machine or other luxuries to make her work easier. She would put on a big boiler of clothes, on a, WOOD STOVE and scrub over an old wash board, to keep the clothes clean for SIX (6) children. No refrigerator-- not even an ice box until about 1920, 1921-- and then it was necessary to buy the chunk of ice every few days. The clothes line must have been about 40 yards long, to take care of the daily washing. Plus during this period-- until about 1917 she also took in several young children as 'boarders'. These were youngsters who belonged to some of the men-- my Dad knew at the S.P. Company.

Everyone remarked, how clean we were kept, but more often than not it was all hand me down clothing, but we did not mind. My mother really toiled. No wonder, there was no time for outside activities. From time to time, visits were made to her sisters and brothers at the foot of Pine Street-- and this was when her father Daniel O'Keefe was alive also.

Recreations were on the Sunday train trips to San Jose, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco, because we had the 'free' passes from the Southern Pacific Company.

A Reverend CROSS lived next door to us, when we moved to 1038 Magnolia Street (1921), and he was a Presbyterian Minister with several small tots at that time. Eventually they moved, and he had the "CROSS CUTS" Program on Radio for a few years-- with lots of canaries or birds singing in the back ground. I understand he has passed away, but one or two of his sons are Presbyterian Ministers, and could be in the Oakland or Contra Costa Area.

Inquire further, if possible for information on MRS. BIRD from the Century Club, at about 5th-- Lewis and Peralta Streets, who did so much for we-- and others, with no funds for vacations, etc. This would have been about 1916-- 1922-- Maybe the Oakland Recreation Camp has details on her activities, and the TRIBUNE and POST- ENQUIRER papers in that period.

Our immediate neighbord hood comprised a
CHINESE LAUNDRY
FRENCH LAUNDRY (Brocchini)
KEENE's GROCERY
WITKIN-- HARDWARE
A DO GHBUT SHOP
ROSE WATERMAN DRUG STORE 7th & Adaline

Bros.
GRUBE BROS. (Dept store)
UREY'S Coal- wood, etc.

Finally a BANK OF AMERICA between Union and Magnolia Streets.

A SALOON run by Jim McClain at 7th & Magnolia Street. where free lunches were served. He allowed us neighbor hood children to come in for a snack but we were ushered out, when a customer arrived.

A SALOON at 7th & Pine Streets-- The family would send us with a large enamel pitcher for beer. We entered through the 'ladies entrance' and knocked at the swinging doors, and then take the beer home, for aunts, uncles, and grand pa O'Keefe.

Look up MRS. JORGENSEN who gave dancing lessons, and promoted (and still does) for the ANNUAL XMAS PAGEANT at Oakland Auditorium. My younger sistes took dancing lessons from her.
There was property on 8th Street--Cypress- and Center, McDERMOTT'S where miniature rail trains were stored, from the 1915 WORLD FAIR. We could see these trains through the fence. Was quite a large estate.

Too-- there were several JEWISH Families, in and around 10th and Union Streets, and several lived on Linden and Filbert Streets. Plus the Jewish families near 8th and Magnolia, and another family who lived next door at 1038 Magnolia. No one thought about the heritage of any one-- we were all neighbors and friends.

Many of the houses in West Oakland had no baths, as such-- perhaps the toilet. Can Remember the MULLER family, when the teen age daughter took her bath in an old wash tub in the kitchen. Happened to be there when visiting with her sister Loretta.

Fortunately our houses always had these necessary facilities-- toilet and bath tub.

My mother seemed to become acquainted with many of the women, and their children, so they visited us. Seems we never went to the other homes.

A Slovanian man worked for my dad at the S. P. Company, and one Sunday asked to take my sister and I to a picnic at SHELLMOUND PARK. Is it still there-- near El Cerrito? Went by the S. P. Train, and when time to return home, the gates were locked and no one could get out to board-- so the adults pushed the high fence down (must have been about 20' tall) so we walked across these boards from the fence, to get to the train, and in between, walked into a ditch, filled with water-- evidently where the fence was anchored. You should have seen us-- the children with knee high white stockings and our white dresses all wet and covered by mud. Poor "JOHN" who took us- was almost afraid to bring us back to our family.

You will have to put a lot of this together, along with the info you took on Monday.

Will be interesting to see how this all comes out.

Hope the project is a big success.

Sincerely,

BERNYCE RYDMAN

Nov 4 - 1981

Dear Pam,

How are you getting along with the Neighborhood History Project?

Were you able to contact Ted - Evelyn McDermid (Thurs Phone 531-2086) 2872 Butters Drive Oakland 94602 regarding info of the Fruitvale Diamond area?

Enclosed article is about the Day Home I told you about. Would be interesting if you could attend next Sunday - and meet various creeds and nationalities. It is located about 4 blocks west of Market Street & on the corners of 8th & Chestnut.

Some of the nuns can possibly tell you about St Joseph's Church - now demolished & it was called "The Portuguese Church"

was just 1/2 block away between 7th & 8th on Chestnut. They may be able to tell you of the loveable Pastor - Father Galli.

Hope you find this useful.

Sincerely

Bernice Burke Rydman

1031 Peralta Rd

Concord CA 94520

My phone 689-6187

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OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Bernyce [Burke] Rydman

Interview conducted September 7, 1981 in Concord, California by Pamela Morton for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Transcription and summary prepared by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, November 1994, Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University Academic Foundation, Inc. for the Cypress I-880 Replacement Project, District 4, CALTRANS.

Bernyce [Burke] Rydman's maternal grandparents were early residents of West Oakland. Margaret [Halloran ?] and Dan O'Keefe, both from County Kerry, Ireland, were married at St. Patrick's c. 1880. Dan O'Keefe, and the informant's father Bill Burke both worked for the Southern Pacific. Her dad ultimately retired as a stationary engineer for the railroad.

Mrs. Rydman was one of six children and was born in the family home at 534 Magnolia c. 1910 [no date is given in the interview]. Her mother often worked outside the home to make money for luxuries, such as the children's Easter dresses and bonnets. She worked at the SP Laundry where the Italian and Portuguese women employees all assumed the dark-haired Irish-American was "one of them." Mrs. Rydman's paternal uncle, John Joseph Burke, was the youngest assemblyman in the State and died tragically at the age of 27.

The interview includes information about the St. Joseph's Day Home (where the interviewee's younger sisters and brother attended), memories of her multi-ethnic neighborhood, street conditions and public wells, and an interesting anecdote about a Chinese peddler and the poor treatment he received from the shipyard workers because he wore a traditional *queue*. Also of interest is the fact that as a child Mrs. Rydman was sponsored to a summer camp through the local "clubhouse," possibly Sunshine Corners.

[The following transcription is a verbatim text in standard English with little or no editing. ~~Project funds did not allow for a subject index.~~]

OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT

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[Tape is cued up.]

Pamela Morton: "I wonder if ... you would tell me about your grandparents, they're the first ones to come to West Oakland."

Bernyce Rydman: "Yes. My grandmother, on my mother's side of the family was Margaret Halloran [?] and she married Dan O'Keefe. And they came from County Kerry in Ireland and I understand that they were married at St. Patrick's in West Oakland. ... they should have been married, I imagine, around 1880, if this church was established in 1879."

Morton: "And they came from the same county?"

Rydman: "Yep. Uh-hmm."

Morton: "But they didn't know each other in-"

Rydman: "As far as I know. Everybody's passed away so there's no way of getting any information."

Morton: "How did they meet in West Oakland?"

Rydman: "That I can't tell you either--- I have no idea. My grandfather, O'Keefe, was a flagman for the S.P. [Southern Pacific] and we used to ... bring his lunch [at] different stations when he was down say at 3rd and Market Street. There's a big ice house and we could go back and get ice out of the icehouse. Last I remember, he was down at 14th and, well, near the 16th Street Depot, which, the 16th Street Depot is still there but 14th Street, you went straight down 14th Street there was a big wharf where the garbage trucks went down this wharf and dump their garbage at the end of the wharf into the Bay. And once in a while I hear on tv or radio or whatever, 12th Street or 7th Street. Well that wasn't the wharf! Seventh Street was the 'Mole,' for the trains, you know, or the ferry boats from the key

route or the S.P. ferry boats were down at the end of Seventh Street but this wharf was way up at 14th Street. And we'd walk under this trestle all the way out to deliver my grandfather's lunch, you know, from time-to-time. He'd let us walk down this wharf, part of the way, and back again and so-"

Morton: "As far as you know he was also in the business working for the S.P.?"

Rydman: "Evidentially. He must have been quite a young man when he came from Ireland. And I really haven't any idea how the met or married or anything like that."

Morton: "Uh-hmm. And where did they live?"

Rydman: "They lived all over West Oakland: the foot of Pine Street and Wood Street and Willow Street and all these streets but I don't know the addresses. They always lived in West Oakland. They attended the same schools that my sisters and brothers and I attended and the cousins [who just passed away. Rydman and Morton look at a school photograph. Father, uncles and father cousins and mother's cousins are all in picture.]

Morton: "Now, the grandparents that we were just talking about they're on your mother's [side]?"

Rydman: "That was O'Keefe's on my mother's side. Yes."

Morton: "And when was your mother born?"

Rydman: "1884."

Morton: "1884. How many children were in that family?"

Rydman: "You're talking about my mother and my sisters and brothers?"

Morton: "Well, in your mother's family."

Rydman: "In my mother's family there was ten. But a couple of the children, I understand, died at birth. And my mother was just sixteen when her mother passed away. And she raised her youngest sister who was two years old at the time. But Aunt Nora, who was born in 1898, now she just died five years ago...."

Morton: "So your mother ended up then caring for her sisters-"

Rydman: "Her father and all her sisters and brothers. And she was sixteen at the time when her mother passed away."

Morton: "So was she the eldest daughter?"

Rydman: "Yes, she was the eldest daughter."

Morton: "Did she work later on?"

Rydman: "Well later, after she was married to my dad, Bill Burke, and she had six children, (I don't know how she did it) but she went and she worked. Because my dad was working at the railroad. But, in the meantime she would work and buy our Easter outfits at old Banberger's Store down in West Oakland. One time she worked at a sandwich-making place at 8th and Clay. Another time she worked at the SP Laundry, down at the foot of Ninth Street. She was a real go-getter. And she had real dark hair and she worked with a lot of the say Italian and Portuguese ladies, and they all tried to talk to her in their foreign tongue thinking that she was so dark, with that black black hair. But they didn't realize that she was Irish...."

Morton: "Were they able to communicate though?"

Rydman: "Well yes. Because these ladies would talk, say in Italian or Portuguese or whatever, they would realize that she didn't know the language so [slight chuckle], they could speak English. And then too another job she had later was cleaning the offices at the Bacon Building in Oakland. The Bacon Building is no longer there. That was between 11th and 12th and faced Washington and also there was an entrance on 12th Street also. So she would take some of us [children], and we had to fight for the privilege of going, because we'd stop and buy doughnuts on the way. And then we'd help empty the waste paper baskets or things like that in the offices. And she did that for quite a while. Always worked hard."

Morton: "And how then did your mother meet your father....?"

Rydman: "Oh, she was at home taking care of her dad, you know, old Dan O'Keefe, and her sisters and brothers. My father was going back and forth: he had already started working for the railroad at that time. And they were married in 1906. Well, she would stand out her front gate. She saw this man going by. And she got his eye. [Laughs] They would see each other-"

Morton: "And your father's [family] then, are they of Irish descent as well?"

Rydman: "Yes."

Morton: "...did his parents come to West Oakland?"

Rydman: "Uh-hmm. As far as I remember they came to West Oakland say after the earthquake. But they went to---but here the story gets kind of confused because we were supposed to be born in the same house my dad was born in, at 534 Magnolia. But if they didn't get to Oakland until later--- way back when my grandparents had a ranch in Concord... I think it's in the Clayton area.... But still they had a house in Oakland, at 534 [Magnolia]. And later the big house at 1038 was built in 1907 and that was built by an uncle of my dad's father. My dad's brother. And this brother, this John Joseph Burke... he passed the bar and went to Santa Clara University and he supposed to [be] the youngest assemblymen in the State of California at the time of his death. But he died at the age of 27. He was preparing to be married and he was going to have his mother live with him in this big house that was just being built at 1038. And he went to ... a political meeting in Sacramento and came home with a violent headache. And they called the doctor and doctor gave him some prescription. But later somebody said they gave him too much, so he died like that. From morning to night. And he was brilliant. And they said that he could take a letter than was ...sealed and lie on the floor and put it on his forehead and tell you the contents."

Morton: "You're kidding!"

Rydman: "No...."

Morton: "So it's unclear then ... how long your father's family was in Oakland?"

Rydman: "Well see, my father went to school here-"

Morton: "Right. At St. Patrick's, I mean, at St. Joseph's Institute?"

Rydman: "Yeah. And he was born in Oakland. But how his parents met I haven't any idea."

Morton: "And then your father worked for the railroads as well?"

Rydman: "Yes, uh-hmm. Seeing that was the thing to do, that was the jobs that were available. Yes."

Morton: "...did the Irish typically do those jobs or-"

Rydman: "Well it seems like they did. And of course on mother's side of the family, her brothers all went to work in the shipyards. I don't think anybody really finished their education. Probably went as far as the 7th or 8th grade. In fact, my mother only went as far as the 4th grade. ...she had to stay home, and take care of the kids

and she lost a lot of time at school. So as far as finishing any grades, she only went to the 5th grade. And from then on she had to stop. But she had beautiful handwriting. She could speak very well. She wasn't highly educated but she knew her reading and writing and things."

Morton: "So they worked in the shipyards. I'm wondering what kinds of jobs were available to the Irish or did the Irish choose to do? Were there particular ones over any other ones?"

Rydman: "Well my father ... was a stationary engineer, was what his final capacity was, position, before he retired. And that was to take care of all the boilers.... He used to take us down to the roundhouse, down in West Oakland, and show us these engines coming in and out. Or give us a ride on the engines or on this round turntable, like, similar to the cable car turntables they have in San Francisco, where they have to turn the engines around."

Morton: "That would be fun for the kids! [Chuckles] And the shipyards, was that Moore Shipyards ...?"

Rydman: "Yeah, uh-hmm."

Morton: "And what did they do for Moore Shipyards? What sort of work?"

Rydman: "I can't really tell you...."

Morton: "And the address was on Magnolia. That's where you were born."

Rydman: "Yeah. 534."

Morton: "And how many brothers and sisters did you have?"

Rydman: "I had three sisters and two brothers. But I only have one sister left...."

Morton: "Where do your rank...?"

Rydman: "I was second to the oldest. So all the younger ones, just one younger sister is still [alive]. She's out in San Leandro. She's the one that went to this St. Joseph's Day Home at 8th and Chestnut. Both my younger sisters, she and the one that just passed away, went there very regularly. Also, my youngest brother Bill.... Anyhow, the sister Connie could give you a lot of stories about the sister's day home. In fact, she and her lady friends from the telephone company go down and see the sisters from time to time, and bring gifts for the youngsters or dress the dolls for the Christmas pageants and things like that."

Morton: "So the day home, what did they do...?"

Rydman: "No, that was just if your parents were working. For instance, you could take your children there and they would just keep them occupied during the day. It's more like a minor kindergarten, I guess. Get their lunch. And they still operate. Have you ever gone down there?"

Morton: "No I haven't."

Rydman: "You should go down there, you would get a lot of good information. They have a nice play yard and they feed the, give the kids their lunch for instance."

Morton: "And it's called 'St. Joseph's-"

Rydman: "Just the Day Home, as far as I know. It's right on the corner of 8th and Chestnut."

Morton: "And they still function as they did? ... it sounds like a daycare."

Rydman: "Just a daycare. And I don't think my folks ever paid anything but supposedly if a person could afford to pay, you know, they were required to."

Morton: "Uh-hmm. And I guess that helped out where both parents, when both parents needed to work."

Rydman: "I know I would go over there and pick up my sisters and brothers when they were through with the day. And the nuns would keep me busy: they had this great big spiral staircase and polished wood, and they'd put you dusting or something. Cause I was, you know, maybe I was ten, or eleven or whatever. And my sisters and brothers were four or five, before they started school."

Morton: "Where again was it located?"

Rydman: "It's right on the corner of 8th and Chestnut. [She gives directions.] And it's a great big place on the corner and I think they have a great big iron railing fence around it."

Morton: "If you could afford to you'd pay then for the services at the day home?"

Rydman: "Yeah, I understand now that they do."

Morton: "But how was it supported [then]?"

Rydman: "I have no idea."

Morton: "Was it a common situation for both parents to be working...?"

Rydman: "My dad didn't make too much money. I can remember them saying 'a hundred twenty dollars a month,' with six kids. So, for the finer things, like Easter coming along or Christmas, then my mother would go out and get a job. And buy us our Easter bonnets and dresses or shoes, really fancy things."

Morton: "For the extras."

Rydman: "Uh-hmm."

Morton: "But then your father's salary was able to take care of-"

Rydman: "Yeah, take care of their food. They didn't have to pay any rent because my grandma had owned this house and had turned it over to him. And so there was no rent to be paid. But even then, $120 didn't go too far...."

Morton: "...now who owned the house?"

Rydman: "Well my grandmother---that was my grandmother's house to begin with, 534 Magnolia. That's where my dad was born.... That was their original house. That's the one you can't find because the freeway took all that property down there."

Morton: "And then I'm wondering, the salary that your father made; how do you think that compared with like other people in the neighborhood? Was ... everybody pretty much on the same economic status?"

Rydman: "Well, most of our neighbors only had one child or two. They didn't have six. [Slight laugh] So that made quite a difference, you know. So they ... always had more [?] than my sisters and brothers and I had. During the measles epidemic, I got the measles first. And then I recovered. So then... there's one brother and three sisters all got the measles and they had them all down in one bed. And then the first morning she could [let them] get out of bed---in those days you had to stay in bed all the time---here my youngest brother Bill was born. So she sent me over to the grocery store and I never used the phone, we didn't have a phone. We didn't have all these luxuries, ...nobody had a car. And, to call my dad home, to call the doctor. We didn't even know that morning that she was due to have her baby any minute, and then go to another neighbor and say, 'Come on over, my mother needs you.' But while my sisters and brothers were in bed, during this few weeks, whatever they had of being [Morton: "Quarantined?"] quarantined, yeah. I'd go out. I couldn't play with the

neighbors kids. I'd throw a ball up in the air and catch it. One of my friends gets such a big kick out of this. And I think, all these people going by, horse and wagons and things, 'Oh that poor little only child.' I was playing that I was an only child [laughs]. Cause I had all these sisters and brothers, being the next-to-the-oldest I was the one that always had to, more so than my other sister would do it, would take care of the kids."

Morton: "Now did you say the neighbors were contacted to help out?"

Rydman: "Well we had one lady, Mrs. Herrick, she came over. The baby was born at home, my brother was born at home which we all had been. And then they decided that since the new baby, he should not be there with the kids just getting over the measles. So they took my mother and the new baby up to my grandmother's house at 1038 [Magnolia]. So this Mrs. Herrick stayed with us, course she was just across the street. But she fixed the meals, you know, and take care of us well, until they allowed my mother to come back home again...."

Morton: "Were you on good terms with all your neighbors?"

Rydman: "Oh yes."

Morton: "Did you do things together?"

Rydman: "No. ...the kids in the neighborhood would play, but the parents didn't get together and go to socials or things. My dad was a great one for helping out at the church all the time and helping at the convent on Peralta Street. And later he'd get some of the fellas that work for him, come down on their days off, for extra time to fix the roof or paint the place and do all this kind of things."

Morton: "Do you remember who your other neighbors were?"

Rydman: "Well directly across from us there was a Chinese family and their name was Dunn [?]. And the elderly grandmother of the family was a Mrs. Watson. And Mrs. Watson had married a Chinese man and had a couple of children by him. Then he died so then she married another Chinese. And all these children, the Dunn family, lived across and Grandma Watson lived with them. They were all Oriental looking. There was only one, Mrs. Watson's son, he eventually married a Portuguese woman by the name of Miguel. [....] But anyhow the Dunns then moved over to [to next to the Grand Lake Theatre]. And they moved to a beautiful house up there. And we'd go out there. My dad, mother would take one of my sisters maybe and me, go and ride the streetcar to go and visit Mrs. Watson. And then quite often

Mrs. Watson would donate some of the clothes from her children ... and grandchildren for my younger sisters."

Morton: "How is their name spelled? The Dunn-?"

Rydman: "D-U-double 'N'."

Morton: "DUNN? How many children then were there in that family?"

Rydman: "In the Dunn family where Mrs. Watson married this, well one of her daughters married a Dunn, that's how they named Dunn, although Mrs. Watson, this old grandmother, she was Irish extraction actually."

Morton: "She was Irish extraction. And she was the one that married the-"

Rydman: "The Chinese fella."

Morton: "Was that unusual?"

Rydman: "Oh, I think so. [Tried to remember the name of street where they moved. They lived up the hill from Grand Lake Theatre into a big stucco house, which "looked like a mansion to us."]

Morton: "I'm interested in Mrs. Watson, that she, after her husband-"

Rydman: [They had been told as children that Mrs. Watson was alive when Lincoln was shot by Booth, and that she may have been a witness.]

Morton: "I guess what I was wondering, and then she ... again married a Chinese man."

Rydman: "I don't know why she got the name Watson, but then see one of her daughters married a Dunn.... And the Dunns had three children, 'Snookie,' 'Frankie,' and I can't remember the name of the youngest little girl."

Morton: "I'm sort of curious under what circumstances they met, Mrs. Watson and her husbands...."

Rydman: "...then there was a Portuguese family that lived across and one of the girls went to school with me, Caldeiras. ...there's Portuguese there, now there's the Irish people and there was Votos, on the same street, they were Italian. And right next door to us at 534 we had a colored lady, Mrs. Scott and she was a maid at the old Capwells, I'm talking about 14th and Clay. That was <u>the</u> Capwell's store at the time. And she was raising her

granddaughter and grandson. And now, how can I remember all that stuff!"

Morton: "That's great. Just the three of them were living in the house next door?"

Rydman: "Yeah, they lived right next door."

Morton: "And were these other families, the Caldeiras and the Votos, were they small families then?"

Rydman: "Yeah. Well, Caldeiras had several, quite a few. Say one girl was going to school with me and they had a younger daughter after that. But she had more children that were all grown up, and, you know, out working, or married or moved away from home. Was quite a large family to begin with I know. Votos, there wasn't about, maybe four or five, I think. Mrs. Scott was raising her two grandchildren, Willette and Elwood."

Morton: "So you know their names: were they playmates of yours?"

Rydman: "Well the Dunns were and the Caldeiras."

Morton: "But did everybody get along?"

Rydman: "Oh yes, uh-hmm. Well, we had a huge big backyard. Well, really was half the block, from Magnolia to Adeline. That's one long block. Well our backyard extended. So mostly we played in our own backyard, we didn't go out in the street and with no playgrounds around except you went all the way up the DeFremery Park which was 5th up to 18th. It was quite a ride or walk. And then you couldn't go straight, you had to go around a couple of blocks because a couple of the streets didn't cut through, if you know what I mean. So we played in our own backyard. And this Mrs. Herrick had one daughter and she'd bring that one daughter over and she would play with us."

Morton: "What background was Mrs. Herrick?"

Rydman: "All I know is her husband was a teamster and she liked to go to these seances. And one time she took my mother, mother had me come along where they knocked under the table, and you're supposed to hear the horses thuds [laughs]."

Morton: "Now, did she live alone?"

Rydman: "She had a husband, he was a teamster and she had this one daughter, Drusilla."

Morton: "... so you really had lots of different people right near you."

Rydman: "And then right around the corner Rubinos, R-U-B-I-N-O, had that big liquor store. They had the liquor store and then they had their apartments upstairs. I don't know if they're still in the directories or not. But we would, say during 1917, we'd set on our back fence and we knew a lot of the songs, 'Over There,' and things that my aunts and uncles would tell us. And they'd be on their porch up there. I don't know how many were in that family, you seldom saw them, they kept pretty much to themselves. But we'd sing at the top of our lungs here, and they'd sing from the top of their lungs up there [laughs] back and forth. That was our activity.

And then we had these Italian people that lived on the other side, Adeline [she sketches a quick map], but anyway they lived over here. ...their name was Georgi, Gino Georgi and Peter Georgi. I think it's spelled G-E-O-R-G-I. And then my mother got very friendly with Mrs. Georgi; you could hardly understand her, she talked with such an accent. She was a tailor and seamstress. She knew her business but she never did learn the language. ...in fact her kids would laugh at me: I'd say, 'Yes, yes,' and they'd say, 'You can't understand a thing she's saying!' Anyhow, I remember them having this great big vat. I imagine it was as tall as this room. And made their own wine. And all their friends came and stepped on the grapes, you know."

Morton: "Did you get to taste any of that wine? Share in the stomping?"

Rydman: "No, we never got to taste it. But we'd watch all this stomping. Then they eventually moved closer, further down in West Oakland. They moved to 12th and Center, I guess. And then my mother would have me go, oh I don't know, from some reason or other, borrow something or take something to her. And that's when this Mrs. Georgi would try to talk to me... and her two boys would laugh, 'You don't understand what she's saying at all! [Laugh]"

Morton: "Was language a problem for any of these other families near you?"

Rydman: "No. This Gino Georgi, he turned out to be a butcher. Oh I haven't seen him for twenty years, I guess."

Morton: "...You were really sort of the only Irish families mixed in all these other different ethnic groups. Was there a section where the Irish lived together or were they generally dispersed?"

Rydman: "No, I think they're all- way down, the O'Learys lived around 3rd and 4th and Campbell. They were just mixed up. There was something---there was a Mrs. Bird, and she had a great big clubhouse, and it's down at the corner which was then 3rd Street and Lewis and Peralta came in like this: Peralta went down this way, Lewis went that way, just a short street, but Peralta extended like out to 32rd Street, 35th Street. She had this big clubhouse. And my mother was somehow got acquainted with her. She was instrumental in having my sisters and I go to what they called the Oakland Recreation Camp up at Tuolomne. I guess at that time it probably cost you ten dollars a week and I'm sure our folks couldn't afford it. And then they'd have a group of boys go for a week or ten days or whatever, and then a group of girls."

Morton: "So it wasn't a daycamp...."

Rydman: "No, we really camped."

Morton: "But you did get to do that then...."

Rydman: "But other than that--- then of course my dad always had free transportation on the SP, as far as going to San Francisco on the ferry boats, taking your bread to feed the sea gulls and then go on out to Golden Gate Park."

Morton: "This extended for all of you and the family then?"

Rydman: "Yea, uh-huh. And then they'd take us down to Altamount Park in San Jose, down to Santa Cruz to the beaches---those were the regular trains, not the electric trains."

Morton: "So that was a real benefit. Did you travel into San Francisco very much, for shopping or pleasure?"

Rydman: "Oh, no. Just, this was more like a picnic. And a few times my dad would go over and visit, say his cousins. for instance, and take one or two of us along."

Morton: "Where did your family do most of their shopping?"

Rydman: "We used to have a little corner grocery store here and a butcher shop there. And the two different department stores in West Oakland, one was Grubeys [check spelling], that was about a block from us. And then the other was Banbergers."

Morton: "And they'd be for clothing?"

Rydman: "Oh yeah. They were [for] hats, new Easter bonnets and Samuel's Shoes. There was a shoe store. Nobody went up to town. Up to what we called-"

Morton: "You mean, like on Broadway."

Rydman: "Fifth and Broadway. And of course our trains went up to 7th and Broadway."

Morton: "But you didn't have to go that far. What about 7th Street. Did you use that for shopping?"

Rydman: "Well, that's where all the little stores were. Yeah, there's Pringles Meat Market, that was about six blocks from us. And Longs was further down, 7th and Wood. Tabukis was a grocery store, that my aunts used to patronize because they lived way down in West Oakland. Cause we considered Magnolia Street halfway between the end of West Oakland---we were kind of midway."

Morton: "I'm wondering what did you sort of consider your neighborhood? Do you have a sense-"

Rydman: "Just a mixture."

Morton: "Uh-hmm. But of boundaries. I'm wondering, did you go all the way from the Bay to Grove or, was there a few blocks that you identified with-"

Rydman: Well Seventh [?] up to as far as Grove Street. And Magnolia was our boundary: from there to school and the church and back to Magnolia Street. I don't know, that was it. And then of course my aunts lived further down in West Oakland, say Pine Street and Cedar. And we'd go to visit them. [....] Magnolia Street was our boundary."

Morton: "And where did you all go to school?"

Rydman: "Well, I went to St. Joseph's and then I went to St. Mary's at 7th and Jefferson for two years. Then I went to work. Then I went to part-time school and working to get my high school diploma."

Morton: "Did your brothers and sisters, they all went to St. Joseph's Institute. Did they go on to high school?"

Rydman: "Oh yeah. Then my two youngest sisters went on to St. Francis de Sales. And my brother went to McClymouth I think. And uh Bill went to St. Francis de Sales and my youngest sister graduated from [?]"

Morton: "And St. Joseph's Institute: I know that was connected to St. Patrick's Church. ...and St. Patrick's Church, I understand, served the Irish community. Would you

say that's true? That most of the Irish went to St. Patrick's?"

Rydman: "Well your Slovoni [sic], your Italians and everybody in that area went to St. Patrick's."

Morton: "Everybody that was nearby."

Rydman: "Yeah, the whole area."

Morton: "Was there one group larger than any other?"

Rydman: "I think the Irish were probably more prominent."

Morton: "So, was that same representation in church then at St. Joseph's Institute as well?"

Rydman: "Uh-hmm. And then the next church you mentioned was St. Joseph's Church. ... they demolished that a few years back. That's right near where this day home is. But now they had, that was really a Portuguese church. I think Portuguese and Italian people. And they took care of the people say from Magnolia all the way up to ... Filbert Street, Linden Street. And there was, I can't remember the name, the kids down that way went to a public school. Can't remember it."

Morton: "Thompkins or Cole?"

Rydman: "Thompkins, yeah it was Thompkins, because Cole was on Union Street, just a block over from us. Yeah. Magnolia and then Union."

Morton: "What was St. Joseph's Institute like...?"

Rydman: "Well, St. Joseph's Institute was our grades, 1st through 8th. And then they gave two year commercial course after that. And that's it."

Morton: "And then your family then attended St. Patrick's Church-"

Rydman: "St. Patrick's Church and St. Joseph's ... Institute."

Morton: "I'm wondering, the Irish didn't seem to live next to one another or at least in one particular section. At St. Patrick's, did that bring the Irish together? Did they share in special holidays or celebrations?"

Rydman: "No [?] Because the sisters there would put a pageant there for various activities, St. Patrick's Day for instance. That is always a big day for the Irish. But, all the parents, whether because you know, there was a little

colored gal, we only had two little gals in our whole school at that time. Their parents came and they were in the plays. And regardless of nationality [sic], I mean they were involved in it. Like Mary Kendrith Ericksen, for instance, they were chosen to be in these plays and naturally all the parents and relatives [came]."

Morton: "Everybody joined in, yeah, yeah. And now you mentioned your mother working. Could you tell me again what sort of jobs?"

Rydman: [She repeats information from earlier discussion.]

Morton: "Now, we talked about the railroads and how a lot of the Irish men worked for the railroads. Was there a job that the Irish women went into?"

Rydman: "Well at the laundry. Mother worked for the SP Laundry. That's when I told you the women that she's working with would speak to her in foreign languages, thinking that she was Italian or Portuguese.... " [Apparently offers interviewer family pictures and papers to go through.]

Morton: "Oh, I'm interested in the flu epidemic. Could you tell me a little bit how that affected your neighborhood."

Rydman: "Well I can remember that school was closed entirely, for how long I couldn't tell you that. But remember going to mass, and the mass was held outside in the school... in the yard adjacent to the church and everybody had to wear the mask. And if you saw somebody without a mask, you could report it to the police! And also you had to carry, wear camphor, in a little cheesecloth sack around your neck. Big hunks of camphor. And then there was a fella that used to live over here, now ... he's Italian, his father made him wear garlic in a little cheesecloth bag around their neck."

Morton: "So everybody had their little home remedies for dealing with the flu."

Rydman: "And that was supposed to kind of, do away with bugs... but none of our family got the flu except one aunt and this youngest sister. And they had the sleeping flu and they just slept, slept, slept. ... in fact the flu epidemic, they just took the whole Oakland Auditorium which was quite new at the time. And they had volunteers, people come in, to act as nurses, to take care of the [sick]. It was really horrible because I'd say I was seven or eight years old, and you know how much you remember...."

Morton: [Additional discussion about the flu. Any other buildings in West Oakland converted to hospital space.] And you say now that you finished your schooling at St. Mary's and then you went to work. Was that to help your family?"

Rydman: "Nope, just to go out and apply for a job when you're 14 or 15 years old and get it and start working [laughs]."

Morton: "What did you start at?"

Rydman: "First I was a transfer girl, a change girl at Capwell's ... [She was then promoted to the mail order adjustment office. Finally she was a personal shopper and moved to the new Capwell's store in 1929.]

Morton: "And so were you living at home while you were working at Capwell's."

Rydman: "Oh yeah."

Morton: "And so you commuted then to downtown-"

Rydman: "Uh-hmm. And walked. Well, it was only twelve blocks from our place to Broadway and then up."

Morton: "Well you're living in Concord now; what finally brought you out to this area. Why did you leave West Oakland."

Rydman: [She was married in 1935. Her husband was living at the time in East Oakland. Lived at a series of apartments throughout Oakland. Bought a home near Holy Names, etc. Retired to Concord.]

End of Tape 1, Side 1

Tape 1, Side 2

[Interview is in progress as tape resumes.]

Morton: "...did neighbors look out for one another?"

Rydman: "It wasn't necessary. You never locked your door. You never had to do anything. We'd go to dances, like when we got 15, 16 years old and walked home all the way, at 11 or 12 at night. No one ever bothered anybody. Never, never, never."

Morton: "[Wonders if Mrs. Rydman remembers Father McNally but that is before her time.]

Rydman: "There was a Father Barry that used to come in and read the report cards, for instance. Once a month I guess. And he was sure strict. He'd really take it out on the boys, if they were---march right up, kneel down and slap their hands with a ruler [laughs]. Really crack them."

Morton: "What became of the home then that you all grew up in?"

Rydman: "Well after my mother died in 1940, my father died in 1950. But in between, say about 1945 or something like that when he decided to sell the house because he was there by himself then, and then he moved over to San Francisco with my sister.... [1038 Magnolia is still standing at the time of the interview. Morton wonders about dispersal of siblings. One sister moved to San Francisco, rest of children stayed in Oakland. One brother worked for railroad.]

Morton: "Did the Depression affect your father's work or the railroads at all?"

Rydman: "No. [Further discussion about her work experiences at Capwell's. She made $10 a week during the Depression. It was fortunate that her family owned a home. Mrs. Rydman lived at home. She worked up until 1972. She talks about her husband, he was quite a musician.]

Morton: "I'm remembering when goats came up, earlier, before we turned on the tape recorder."

Rydman: "...there was a lot of vacant lots down there. People just raised their own goats, in fact my dad had one from one of his employees...."

Morton: "Did many people have gardens? Did you have a garden?"

Rydman: "Well we just had our little front garden, 1038 was a lawn and lilies and things like that. At 534 there's a small little front garden with flowers-"

Morton: "But you didn't grow any vegetables?"

Rydman: "[Indicates no.]

[They discuss what would appear to be a packet of family papers and pictures.]

Morton: [....]

Rydman: "Now that's something else my mother did. When we were living, before my grandmother died, we were living at these various addresses, you know. There's a lady next door, Mrs. Allen, that she'd go over and help her prepare the meals. She ran a regular boarding house. And I remember this woman used to smoke cigars and that was really something! [Laughs]"

Morton: "...yes I understand that a lot of women ran boarding houses. How about Mrs. Watson, when her husband died, how was she able to [live]?"

Rydman: [Supposes that her children were old enough to take care of them. Shows Ms. Morton a picture of when they lived on Henry Street, that was during Prohibition. She recalls the angry protests against the law. There was a Tavolini bar/restaurant? Right across the street from them on Henry Street was a well (inside an apartment house?). They could go over and fill up a pitcher at night. Shows interviewer pictures on Union Street. Talks about the need to fumigate houses when they moved from house to house. Had to close all the windows and doors. Close up house for two-three days. Has pictures which show Grube Brothers's and Bamberger's Department Stores.]

Morton: "What were the conditions of the streets like when you were growing up? Were they paved?"

Rydman: "Well, yeah. Except the gutters would be blocks, you know. And it was a wooden strip at the top, they were really not cemented in straight like you have now. Streets were all good."

Morton: "And street lighting-"

Rydman: "Oh yeah. All the, say the butcher and the fella that had the hardware store, they had their horse and buggies for their deliveries. But right next to us at this 534 [Magnolia] the ... people owned the property, was like a couple of apartments and a small cottage. He had a big barn where he rented his barn out for these merchants for their horses. And they'd bring their horses in every night. And so we could wait till they got, say, so far, and then hitch on the back of the wagons and ride in until they get into the stables part."

Morton: "Sounds like fun. And I thought about ice cream too. Did you go out for ice cream...? [She looks through papers; perhaps there was a note about this or a picture which has triggered this question?] "Oh well.... Did the Chinese sell door-to-door, do you remember...?"

Rydman: "... outside of this family [? Dunns] there was a Chinese laundry up on 7th Street, that was during World War

I where the [shipwrights were???]. There was a Chinaman that used to ride their [sic] delivery wagon around, horse and buggy. And he had a big braid, like he just come from China, really old fashioned. And all these men from the shipyards would really hassle and tease him. 'Gonna cut his braid off.' And he'd run [laughs]. But we'd go by the laundry where they were ironing, and that's when they really used to spit on the clothes to [dampen them] [chuckles]. And they ironed, even at home we had a flat iron heated on the stove. No electric iron, no gas iron, when they finally came in."

Morton: "And the ragman."

Rydman: "That's the one I said picked up the rags, bottles and sacks."

Morton: "And that was his livelihood. He would go by and pick that up."

Rydman: "Uh-hmm."

Morton: "Well great. Are there any other little stories that you would like to share?"

Rydman: "I can't think of anything. [Gives Ms. Morton some family papers/pictures to borrow.]

End of Interview

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